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Idaho research institutions supporting shared computing center

IDAHO FALLS — Idaho National Laboratory has signed an agreement with Idaho's three universities to pool computing resources in support of the state's research community.

The agreement formally establishes the Idaho Computing Consortium, composed of INL, Boise State University, Idaho State University and University of Idaho — all of whom are partners in the Center for Advanced Energy Studies (CAES).

As part of the agreement, Boise State University recently installed a new supercomputing resource at INL. University of Idaho and Idaho State University are expected to install systems over the next few months.

"The Idaho universities and INL have shown through CAES what they can accomplish when they work together," said J.W. "Bill" Rogers Jr., CAES director. "We expect the same to occur with the Idaho Computing Consortium. This agreement will allow the Idaho universities to pool their computing resources so they can better compete for research funding."

Boise State researchers will be able to access the system — and other shared computing resources — through the Idaho Regional Optical Network (IRON). IRON is a high-speed backbone computer network that connects researchers across the state and Idaho to the international research community. IRON is a grass-roots collaboration connecting Idaho universities, state government, hospitals and other nonprofit causes with affordable, reliable high-speed bandwidth.

Brent Stacey, INL's chief information officer and one of the agreement's architects, said supporting Idaho's universities is important for the lab.

"Our ability to bring Idaho universities access to high-performance computing, modeling and simulation tools — as well as specialized facilities — is good for Idaho's research community, our students and future employers like INL," Stacey said.

Through the consortium, Idaho universities will gain access to increased computational power that they wouldn't have on their own. Historically, universities and research institutions with access to increased supercomputing power are more competitive and successful in developing and executing research.

"Boise State University has opened the door to a world of new opportunities in research," said Brian McDevitt, Network Services manager. "I believe the Idaho Computing Consortium will benefit researchers at our university."

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of the strategic goal areas of DOE: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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—INL-11-016—

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